

# 107 KILLED IN COLLAPSE OF THEATER; TEN KNOWN DEAD FROM VIRGINIA

## THAW SETS IN AS MERCURY MOUNTS; FRESHET FEARED

City Takes Appreciable  
Stride Toward Meteorological  
Normalcy.

RIVER MAY OVERFLOW  
BANKS IF MELT IS RAPID

Warmth of Sun's Rays Con-  
verts Snow Into Disagree-  
able Slush.

TRAIN SERVICE IMPROVES

V. R. & P. Company Operates Addi-  
tional Trolleys, as Striking Car-  
men "Hold Firm."

Aided by a steadily rising tempera-  
ture and the helpful rays of Old  
Sol, Richmond took an appreciable  
stride toward meteorological nor-  
malcy yesterday. Induced by the  
warmth of the sun, a thaw, which  
began some time ago, has been  
expected, got under way and by early  
afternoon many sidewalks that a few  
hours before had been all but im-  
passable, became safe for pedes-  
trians.

As a result of the thaw, which is  
believed to have been pretty general  
along the James River watershed, the  
stream, it is feared, soon will reflect  
the melting of the snow in overflow-  
ing its banks and inundating bank-  
ments along Cary and, possibly,  
Main Streets, to the detriment of re-  
serve stocks of goods of Cary Street  
wholesalers and Main Street retail  
merchants.

A record-breaking snow was regis-  
tered at Lynchburg, and the rapid  
thaw of this fall, coupled with that  
at Columbia, augmented by blankets  
of the heavy that fell in the moun-  
tains contiguous to tributaries that  
empty into the "Noble James," which  
rapidly will disappear when the sun  
begins to get in its work, furnishes  
cause for apprehension among those  
doing business on lower Main and  
Cary Streets.

"Blockettes" in "Drenching."  
As it is an undoubted fact that  
history has a habit of repeating,  
that part of Fulton known as  
"Blockettes," and wherein are situated  
the wharves and docks of the exist-  
ing Old Dominion and the first-  
while Old Dominion and the exist-  
ing Richmond-New York steamship  
lines, also is in for a considerable  
"drenching" in the event the "Jaw"  
is sufficiently rapid to cause a sud-  
den rise in the river.

In the freshet that followed the  
then record-breaking snowfall of  
1899, the waters of the river backed  
into lower Main Street and even into  
lower Franklin, and completely bar-  
ricaded Main between Fifteenth and  
Eighteenth Streets and still lower on  
Main Street, opposite the then Old  
Dominion wharves, necessitating re-  
sort to rowboats, which, for a nom-  
inal fee, conveyed citizens living in  
the East End across the flooded  
areas.

The thaw set in at about the hour  
that hundreds were on their way  
home from the morning church ser-  
vices, and, until it was checked,  
shortly after sundown, by a percep-  
tible drop in the temperature and  
(Continued on Page 5, Col. 6.)

## DEAD LAY LONG IN ROWS UNTIL RECOGNIZED BY KIN

### Eleven Times Death Struck Down Husband and Wife, Side by Side—Hundreds of Washington's Homes Plunged in Grief.

(By Associated Press.)  
WASHINGTON, Jan. 29.—Recovered  
from the wreck and horror of the  
ruined Knickerbocker Theater, a pitiful  
stream of mangled bodies, dead  
and living, flowed all last night and  
today in the lower rooms of a  
Christian Science Church a few hun-  
dred yards away. At the first word  
of the disaster, the place was thrown  
open to these stricken folk and the  
hundreds of others who came to  
search for their dead or injured.  
And as the full weight of the losses  
became known, the dead monopolized  
the space, crowding the injured in the  
small rooms.

It was merely a first-aid station  
for those taken crushed, but alive,  
from the wreckage. They were car-  
ried in stretchers over the slippery  
pavement with lines of soldiers keep-  
ing the crowds far back. Doctors  
and nurses and women eager to  
bring their sympathy and cheer to  
the suffering or bereaved, waited in  
the church. They tenderly washed  
away the gray dust of the crumpled  
concrete, the grime and caked blood,  
blackened sometimes by hours of  
waiting pinned under the debris un-

## RICHMONDERS PERISH, MRS. WESSON IS KILLED, IN BIG CATASTROPHE

Miss Elizabeth and John M.  
Jeffries Are Among the  
Victims.

J. McKENNEY ON LIST

Several, Severely Injured, Are  
Rescued From Mass of  
Wreckage.

Virginia's death list of victims in  
the great Knickerbocker Theater dis-  
aster in Washington grew hourly  
last night as hundreds of crushed,  
nailed and injured were removed  
from the tangled, twisted mass of  
wreckage.

Ten are known to be dead and  
several injured severely. All the vic-  
tims have been identified positively.  
It is reported, one Richmond man  
was killed outright. His crushed,  
mutilated body was recovered.  
Many Virginians were in the audi-  
ence. Some have been recovered—  
dead. Others, severely injured, have  
been rescued from the death trap.  
It is known that a Norfolk girl had  
an arm torn from her body when the  
great roof crashed into the theater  
audience under its ponderous burden  
of snow.

Mrs. Wesson Is Killed.  
Colonel Charles Macon Wesson,  
ordnance department, U. S. A., son

He and Daughter Hurt;  
Wife Killed in Disaster



COL. CHARLES MACON WESSON,  
of Captain C. M. Wesson, of Rich-  
mond, was injured badly. His wife,  
Mrs. Wesson, was killed. His daughter,  
Miss Elizabeth, was injured. (Continued on Page 2, Col. 3.)

## FEWER "TAG DAYS" IF BILL IS ADOPTED MAY NOT CHANGE INAUGURAL PLANS

Hall Measure in Assembly Re-  
quires Solicitors to  
Keep Books.

DR. BARRETT APPROVES  
Head of Many Virginia Or-  
ganizations Gives Indorse-  
ment to Move.

When House Bill No. 13 reaches the  
floor of the House of Delegates for  
discussion, it will be pointed out that  
not only will the bill prove effective  
in presenting the actual claims of  
organizations or persons mentioned  
in the paper, but will have a ten-  
dency to minimize the number of "tag  
days."

Delegate Wilbur C. Hall, of Lou-  
isville, well known in philanthropic  
circles, patron of the bill, which re-  
quires persons, firms, corporations and  
associations soliciting subscriptions  
or contributions to any cause or  
thing, to keep books showing sums  
collected and how disbursed, said  
last night that he had just received  
a letter from Dr. Kate Waller Bar-  
rett, well known in philanthropic  
movements, head of the Daughters of  
the American Revolution, commander  
of the Virginia department of the  
Woman's Auxiliary of the American  
Legion, and president of the Florence  
(Continued on Page 19, Col. 3.)

## WASHINGTON CRASH VIVIDLY DESCRIBED IN ALL ITS HORRORS

Mangled Mass of Debris  
Depicts Gruesome  
Catastrophe.

STRETCHER-BEARERS  
ADD TO TRAGIC PICTURE

Doctors, Nurses and Rescuers  
Work Like Mad to Aid  
Injured.

AMBULANCES RUSH TO AND FRO

Onlookers Are Silent as Workers Re-  
move Dead From Gray and  
Ghastly Wreck.

By Clayton Whitehill.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 29.—Four  
gaunt walls surrounding a hill of  
dirty snow, huge concrete blocks,  
mangled steel girders, plaster and  
brick, two hundred firemen and sol-  
diers working feverishly with picks,  
crowbars, torches and ropes among  
the ruins. Nurses and doctors,  
stretcher-bearers and thousands of  
silent and drawn onlookers working  
or waiting at their posts within and  
without.

This is the picture of Washington's  
greatest tragedy—the collapse of the  
Knickerbocker, motion picture the-  
ater, showplace of the capital's  
moviedom, at Eighteenth Street and  
Columbia Road. The picture has been  
maintained, reel after reel, in all of  
its horror, since shortly after 9:30  
Saturday night.

Groans Die Away.  
Groans of the injured and dying, for  
the most part, had been stifled by  
noon of the Sabbath, when the great  
blizzard, which swept the city, had  
completely spent itself, and the sun  
shone down upon the fury and  
tragedy the storm had wrought. Res-  
cuers held out slight hope of recover-  
ing alive the few still left in the  
ruin late Sunday, who had been en-  
gulfed in the avalanche of death-  
dealing wreckage.

It happened that the writer was  
passing the theater at the hour the  
tragedy occurred. From within, the  
notes of the organ had just died away.  
There was a sound like the sighing of  
a great wind, then a thunderous  
rumble, which shook the ground un-  
derfoot as the snow-laden roof dis-  
appeared within the walls. With a  
crash the exit doors were literally  
blasted out. Then silence, followed  
almost immediately by the low moan  
of many subdued voices punctuated  
by shrieks of frightened, injured and  
dying.

Noise of panic followed. Those  
nearest the exits stampeded for  
safety. Charles Whitcomb, of New  
York, who had purchased the last  
ticket at the theater performance,  
had just opened the door to enter  
the house when the crash began. The  
force of the impact hurled him across  
the lobby through the outside door  
into the street. Only slightly bruised,  
he muttered thanks to God for his  
escape.

Few Are Fortunate.  
Not more than half a dozen per-  
sons, seated on the outermost aisle of  
the orchestra, were as fortunate as  
Whitcomb, in escaping.  
Meantime, from the great snow-  
drifts, blocking all traffic without,  
thousands of people appeared as if by  
magic. From nearby fire stations,  
companies summoned by a general  
alarm, fought desperately with their  
heavy equipment to make their way  
to the scene.

Those who reached the disaster  
first saw a hill, three stories high,  
gray and ghastly. Now and then  
moans of women and children and  
shouts of imprisoned men pierced  
the air above the clang and roar of  
fire engines and ambulances. These  
cries guided the rescuers.  
The huge mound of ruin was made  
more ghastly by the shadows cast  
upon it from the standing walls and  
the few electric lights that had not  
been broken by the collapse. Snow  
driven by a high wind swept down  
the wreckage.

In the weird light, rendered more  
so by the fact that I had just come  
in from the bright lights and glisten-  
ing snow without, the figures of hu-  
man beings could be seen frantically  
struggling to get out, terror-stricken.  
The straining and cries of those pin-  
ioned gave me the impression that  
the huge mass of debris was alive,  
but could not move.

Under the wreckage I could see  
men, women, girls and boys seeking  
to crawl along small openings be-  
tween the seats. Shouted directions  
from friend to friend filled the air.  
Mingled with these came the shouts  
for help.

"Christ save me," some woman  
screamed. It seemed that all were  
moaning and crying at once.  
Probably the wind and cold and  
driven snow silenced the early  
(Continued on Page 2, Col. 2.)

## ALL VICTIMS OF CRASH IDENTIFIED; 134 HURT, 14 OF THEM SERIOUSLY

### LIST OF IDENTIFIED DEAD

(By Associated Press.)  
WASHINGTON, Jan. 29.—The  
identified dead in the Knicker-  
bocker Theater catastrophe are:  
Former Representative A. J.  
Barkfield, formerly of Pittsburgh,  
Pa.  
Miss Helena Barkfield, daugh-  
ter of former Representative.  
Archie Bell, formerly of Vine-  
land, N. J.  
Chauncey C. Brainerd, Wash-  
ington correspondent of the  
Brooklyn Daily Eagle.  
Mrs. Chauncey C. Brainerd.  
Wilfred Brousseau, North Adams,  
Mass., student at Georgetown  
University.  
Mrs. Margaret Dutch, Luding-  
ton, Mich.  
Guy S. Eldridge, Salt Lake City,  
brother-in-law of Senator Smoot,  
of Utah.  
Oscar G. Venston, Chicago, his  
wife and two daughters, Helen and  
Annie.  
Cutler Laffin, Jr., aged 16, Chi-  
cago.  
Miss Nannie Lee Lambert, for-  
merly of Ashboro, N. C.  
John W. Murray, The Plains, Va.  
W. B. Sammon, of Wyoming,  
student at George Washington  
University.  
W. L. Schofield, Jr., Danville,  
Va.  
Laverne Sproul, aged 17, Chi-  
cago, nephew of Representative  
Elliott W. Sproul, of Illinois.  
C. E. Stephenson, Boston.  
Lewis Strayer, Washington cor-  
respondent of the Pittsburgh Dis-  
patch.  
Mrs. Virginia Farrand, sister of  
Minister Bianchi, of Guatemala.  
H. Conroy Vance, Fredericks-  
burg, Va.  
Mrs. H. Conroy Vance, Fred-  
ericksburg, Va.  
William Walters, Brooklyn, N.  
Y., student at Georgetown Uni-  
versity.  
Mary Ethel Atkinson.  
Albert Baker.  
Joseph W. Beal.  
William G. Bickle.  
Miss Francis Bickle.  
Miss C. C. Biddle.  
Thomas R. Bonine.  
Mrs. Daisy Garvey Poeden.  
Albert Buchler.  
William M. Canby.  
Mrs. D. H. Covell.  
W. N. Crawford.  
W. M. Crocker.  
Vincent W. Decker.  
Thomas M. Dorsey.  
Miss Helen Dorsch.  
Kirkland Duke.

## GROANS OF DYING HEARD AMID THUNDEROUS THEATER CRASH

### Shrieks and Cries of Men, Women and Children, With Tremendous Roar of Falling Roof, Are Described by Representative Smithwick, of Florida.

(By Associated Press.)  
WASHINGTON, Jan. 29.—An av-  
alanche of broken plaster, bricks,  
snow, splintered wooden and twisted  
steel beams catapulting upon the  
audience, while the orchestra played  
and a comedy film ground out, is the  
description of the Knickerbocker  
Theater disaster given today by Rep-  
resentative John H. Smithwick, of  
Tennessee, Fla. He was in the bal-  
cony of the theater when the roof  
collapsed under its weight of snow  
and escaped unaided—just how he  
cannot recall—with more or less se-  
rious hurts.

"The orchestra was playing funny  
music and a comic film was run-  
ning," said Mr. Smithwick, lying in  
his bed, bandaged and with his face  
and hands covered with cuts. "Sud-  
denly there was a sharp crack. I  
looked up and saw a great fissure  
running across the ceiling. It was  
right over my head. I instantly re-  
alized what was happening. The  
plaster began to fall, dropping down  
in large and small chunks all over  
the theater, it seemed to me. While  
I was looking up a great piece right  
over my head started to fall. It  
cruled, crouching, involuntarily I  
supposed, down between the seats. The  
piece struck the seat right where I  
had been sitting. The force was

## 2 Little Girls Found Asleep in Wreckage

(By Associated Press.)  
WASHINGTON, Jan. 29.—Sleep-  
ing peacefully beneath the  
debris in the wrecked Knicker-  
bocker Theater, two little girls,  
aged about 4 and 6, were found  
today by rescuers. Ten  
hours after the playhouse roof had  
fallen in.  
Apparently neither of the chil-  
dren was badly hurt. They were  
taken to a hospital without iden-  
tification.

### Soldiers, Marines, Police and Firemen, as Res- cue Workers, Fight a Desperate Battle Through Dark and Daylight in Race With Death.

### 300 IN KNICKERBOCKER THEATER WHEN ROOF FALLS ON LAUGHING AUDIENCE

### Investigation of Collapse Has Been Ordered—Senator Capper to Introduce Resolution in Senate Demanding Rigid Inquiry Into Catastrophe.

(By Associated Press.)  
WASHINGTON, Jan. 30.—Official police records early  
today placed the known dead in the Knickerbocker Theater  
disaster at 107, when the roof, weighted by more than two  
feet of snow, collapsed.

Elimination of duplicated names brought the final total  
down from the unofficial peak of 112, at which the toll of the  
catastrophe was placed late last night.

The list of injured stood at 134, with fourteen listed as  
"seriously injured."

This was said to include every body thus far recovered  
from the ruins, leaving none unidentified.

Rescue workers, fighting a desperate battle through dark and day-  
light, had recovered that number tonight.

### SEARCH OF RUINS UNCHECKED.

The large majority of the victims, both killed and injured, were  
residents of this city, although many came recently from other places.  
Exploration of the ruins went on unchecked, but those in  
charge believed few additional bodies would be found. Without regard  
to their own risks, soldiers, marines, sailors, police, firemen and citizen  
volunteers had fought their way beneath the wreckage over practically  
the whole floor space of the auditorium.

The exact number in the theater when the steel and concrete span  
of the roof buckled and fell under its two-foot load of snow prob-  
ably will never be known. The stories of perhaps a hundred who got out  
uninjured have been reported. These accounts for a few more than 300  
in the audience that was roaring in laughter at a film comedy when the  
roof fell on them like a blanket, carrying down the front of the wide  
balcony in its crash.

### STORM KEPT MANY AWAY.

Normally, the theater has had every seat filled at that hour and  
nearly 2,000 persons saw its capacity. The same unprecedented snow-  
fall which brought death to the venturesome few kept the many at home.  
Street car traffic had been abandoned, and streets and sidewalks were all  
but impassable with drifts.

There has been no time as yet for official inquiry as to the cause of  
the disaster. The ruins themselves disclose, however, that the entire  
mass of steel held concrete that formed the roof had come down. The  
crash swept the supports out from under the balcony, apparently, and  
this hinged down at an angle of 45 degrees, adding the tangled mass  
of wreckage on the floor below.

Senator Capper, of Kansas, a member of the Senate District of  
Columbia Committee, announced tonight that as soon as the Senate  
reconvened he would introduce a resolution calling for an investigation  
of the Knickerbocker Theater disaster and also of all large building  
construction in Washington since the beginning of the war.

Senator Capper said reports had come in that to a more or  
less degree the building code of the District of Columbia had been  
violated during the rush of construction following the increase in the  
city's population following the war declaration.

## E. H. SHAUGHNESSY DYING FROM INJURIES IN THEATER CRASH

### Second Assistant Postmaster- General Undergoes Three Blood Transfusions.

(By United News.)  
WASHINGTON, Jan. 29.—Edward H.  
Shaughnessy, Second Assistant Post-  
master-General, now acting Postmas-  
ter-General in the absence of Will  
Hays and First Assistant Dr. Work,  
has undergone three blood transfu-  
sions in the effort to save his life.  
Shaughnessy, when discovered in  
the Knickerbocker Theater ruins, was  
pinned under a steel girder, a huge  
concrete block resting over his ab-  
domen where it had fallen, crushing  
the pelvis. Despite his agony, he  
insisted that rescue workers first re-  
lease his wife, who had suffered three  
broken ribs, and his two daughters,  
one of them with both arms frac-  
tured.

His condition at the hospital late  
Sunday, was such that two blood  
transfusions were made and a third  
was given Sunday night. His con-  
dition is regarded as grave.

## FRANCE WANTS GENOA PARLEY POSTPONED

### Does Not Desire to Take Initiative in Bringing About Such Action.

(By United News.)  
PARIS, Jan. 29.—France is eager  
for a postponement of the scheduled  
Genoa conference, it can be stated on  
good authority. It does not desire  
to take the initiative toward bring-  
ing about such postponement unless  
assured of thorough American sup-  
port.  
American Ambassador George Har-  
vey is scheduled to confer with Pre-  
mier Poincare at 4:30 Monday. The  
ambassador maintains that his visit to  
the new French Premier is purely  
one of courtesy. He doubts that he  
has received any recent instructions  
regarding the Genoa meeting from  
Washington. Nevertheless it may be  
regarded that Poincare, who speaks  
English fluently, will seek to learn  
from Harvey just what the American  
attitude may be toward the proposed  
Economic Council.

### Postpone International Meeting.

THE HAGUE, Jan. 29.—The in-  
augural meeting of the permanent ex-  
ecutive of the International Justice has  
been postponed, but it probably will be  
held within a fortnight.